

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner stated that Applicants' request for continued examination ("RCE") was timely, and entered Applicants' submission filed on May 1, 2003¹. The Examiner withdrew the indication of allowable subject matter of claim 9, which is comparable to current claim 12, upon further review of the Krock patent (U.S. Patent No. 3,600,917). The Examiner objected to claim 12. The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 7, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Krock patent in view of the Krauss patent (U.S. Patent No. 5,590,444). The Examiner rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Krock patent in view of the Krauss patent, and further in view of the Isenmann patent (U.S. Patent No. 3,979,934). Finally, the Examiner indicated that claims 10 and 11 would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Objection to Claim 12

The Examiner objected to claim 12, asserting that the term "the peripheral corners of straight portions on both sides" lacked antecedent basis for "the peripheral corners" and "on both sides." Applicants have amended claim 12 herein to delete the word "the" before peripheral corners. No new matter has been added by this amendment, nor has the scope of the claim been narrowed. Applicants submit that the Examiner's objection to claim 12 has been overcome by the above amendment.

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¹ Applicants filed a Preliminary Amendment with the RCE on May 1, 2003, and filed an additional Preliminary Amendment on May 27, 2003.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 12 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over at least the Krock patent in view of the Krauss patent. As shown above, Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite, *inter alia*, “a guide member is protruded linearly from a center of a front end of the concave portion or the convex portion of the male body” and “partition pieces for guiding the guide member on a same line as an axis line of the guide member are provided on an inner surface of the housing of the female body.” No new matter has been added by these amendments. Support for these amendments may be found in the specification at, for example, page 11, lines 9-23 and page 13, lines 2-13.

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the Examiner must show three criteria: (1) some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference teachings; (2) a reasonable expectation of success; and (3) that the references teach or suggest all the claim limitations. See M.P.E.P. § 2143. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections because the Krauss and Krock patents do not teach or suggest, either alone or in combination, at least “a guide member is protruded linearly from a center of a front end of the concave portion or the convex portion of the male body” and “partition pieces for guiding the guide member on a same line as an axis line of the guide member are provided on an inner surface of the housing of the female body,” as recited in Applicants’ amended claim 1.

The Krock patent is directed to a molded keyholder. This patent discloses a connector 10 that includes a male member 11 and a female member 31. (The Krock

patent, col. 1, lines 35-38.) The male member 11 includes a flange 13 at a trailing end of the member, and a keyring hole 17 extends through the flange 13 at a portion of the flange 13 that is formed as a boss 19. (*Id.* at col. 1, lines 39-47.)

The Examiner asserted that the boss 19 corresponds to Applicants' claimed convex portion. (*See Office Action*, p. 3.) Assuming, *arguendo*, that the boss 19 may correspond to Applicants' claimed convex portion, the boss 19 does not include any structure protruded linearly from it that may comprise Applicants' recited "guide member." Thus, the Krock patent does not disclose or suggest at least "a guide member is protruded linearly from a center of a front end of the concave portion or the convex portion of the male body," as recited in Applicants' amended claim 1.

In addition, the Krock patent discloses that the female member 31 includes an elongated body 32 with wide face walls 33, narrow edge walls 34, a solid end 35, and an open end 36. (The Krock patent, col. 1, lines 48-51.) The body 32 defines a body cavity 37 extending from a mouth 38 at the open end 36 toward the solid end 35. (*Id.* at col. 1, lines 51-53.) The body cavity 37 becomes progressively narrower in the direction from the open end 36 to the solid end 35. (*See id.* at col. 1, lines 53-56.)

As shown most clearly in Figs. 5 and 6 of the Krock patent, the female member 31 does not include any structure provided on its inner surfaces. Accordingly, this patent does not disclose or suggest at least "partition pieces for guiding the guide member on a same line as an axis line of the guide member are provided on an inner surface of the housing of the female body," as recited in Applicants' amended claim 1.

The Krauss patent is directed to a side release buckle with improved distribution of stress under loads. The buckle 10 includes a female member 52 and a male member

54. (The Krauss patent, col. 3, lines 29-30.) The female member 52 includes a recess 140 comprised of angled edges 142, 146, and vertical edge 144 that together form an interlocking key receptacle that is complementary in shape to an interlocking key of the male member 54, which is comprised of angled edges 132, 134 and a vertical end wall 108. (See *id.* at col. 4, lines 33-40; Figs. 8 and 9.) The male member 54 has a guide arm 110 extending from the end wall 108 for complementary engagement with alignment grooves 112 formed within a channel 66 on the inside surface of top and bottom walls 70, 72 of the female member 52. (See *id.* at col. 3, line 66 - col. 4, lines 8; Figs. 6-11.)

Assuming, *arguendo*, that the guide arm 110 may correspond to Applicants' claimed guide member, the guide arm 110 does not protrude from a center of a front end of a concave or convex portion of the male member 54. Instead, the guide arm 110 protrudes from straight vertical end wall 108 (see the Krauss patent, col. 4, lines 1-5) and perhaps partially from angled edges 132, 134 (see Fig. 9). Thus, the Krauss patent does not disclose or suggest at least "a guide member is protruded linearly from a center of a front end of the concave portion or the convex portion of the male body," as recited in Applicants' amended claim 1.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that independent claim 1 is not obvious over the Krauss and Krock patents, either alone or in combination, and thus is allowable over these patents. Because claims 3, 4, 7, 8, and 10-12 depend from claim 1, these claims should be allowable over these patents for at least the same reasons that claim 1 is allowable. See, e.g., M.P.E.P. § 2143.03 ("If an independent

claim is nonobvious under 35 U.S.C. 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious.") (*citing In re Fine*, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988)).

Conclusion

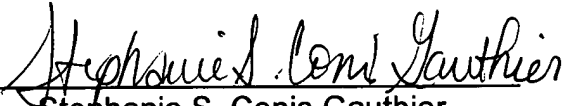
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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